

STRETCHING

the filmmaker

The filmmaker's art has always been a precarious one, and Neill McKee, who heads the IDRC's audio-visual unit, is one man who is well qualified to testify as to just how precarious it can get.

McKee completed his first film on the Centre, a 22-minute documentary entitled *Stretching the Earth*, last September. In the course of gathering material over almost one year he underwent such trials as a narrow escape from an overturned Landrover at dusk on a country road in Senegal, a sleepless seasick night aboard a trawler off the Guyana coast, sharing a room with a handful of hungry tsetse flies in Kenya in order to film them at close range, and another nautical adventure in an apparently sinking barge with 20 fishermen off the Philippines.

Comments McKee: "At times I felt it should have been called 'stretching the filmmaker'. But in spite of a few mishaps, it was incredible how smoothly things went. I couldn't have covered half as much ground without the cooperation, encouragement and understanding of literally dozens of people who took time out from their own busy schedules to talk to me about their work, show me around and advise me on what, when and where to film for the best results."

In four expeditions McKee visited 77 project sites in 26 countries, and survived 104 take-offs and landings. Along the way he accumulated miles of 16mm. film, several thousand colour slides and black-and-white photographs and a collection of taped interviews with scientists and research workers of many nationalities.

What is it all for? The film was the first major production to result from the marathon trip. Giving a broad general view of the types of research currently supported by the Centre, it should be of interest and practical value to people involved in international development at all levels. Discussions have already begun with a view to getting the film shown on television in several countries in order to reach a wider audience.

Films with a regional emphasis dealing with the Centre's work in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean have now been completed. These give more detail on the problems peculiar to each region, and the research being carried out there. Beyond this, several slide presentations have been produced — one was screened for a recent international gathering of home economists and nutritionists — and scores of photographs have been used to illustrate IDRC's scientific and general publications.

Film-making can be an expensive, complicated and potentially disruptive operation, especially in a developing country. McKee, however, prefers the low-cost, low-key approach. As a one-man crew he carries a movie camera, two still cameras, a tape recorder and a suitcase full of film stock, tapes and accessories. He aims to be as unobtrusive as possible, a technique he has come close to perfecting while producing nine development films in recent years.

"A few times I found myself in a village or a research station that had just been inundated by a full-scale film crew of four or five people," he says. "The negative reaction resulting from such invasions reinforced my opinion that the low-key one or two man

operation is best suited to filming development work."

The following items produced by the Centre's audio-visual unit are currently available on a free loan basis or may be purchased if required for permanent use.

Films

Stretching the Earth — on IDRC-supported research around the world, 22min., 16mm., French version available. May be obtained from IDRC Ottawa, or from any of the Centre's regional offices.

Common Task — on IDRC-supported research in Latin America and the Caribbean. 20min., 16mm., Spanish version available. May be obtained from IDRC Ottawa or the regional office in Bogota.

Continent in the Making — on IDRC-supported research in Africa. 24 min., 16mm., French version available. May be obtained from IDRC Ottawa or the regional offices in Africa.

Asia: the Search for Solutions — on IDRC-supported research in Asia. 24min., 16mm., English only. May be obtained from IDRC Ottawa, or the Singapore regional office.

Pâ-Noi, the Village Midwife — a co-production with the Faculty of Public Health, Mahidol University, and the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand, this is a film on Thai traditional midwives and their integration into the family planning service of their country. 17min., 16mm., French version available. May be obtained from IDRC Ottawa, or from the regional offices in Singapore, Nairobi and Bogota.

Slide shows

Some Food Priorities for the Third World (English and French)

Hawkers and Vendors in Southeast Asia (English only)

Rural Health Care (English and French)

IDRC in East Africa (English and French)

Details of these and other productions will appear in future issues of *IDRC Reports* as they become available. For further information write to: IDRC Audio-Visual Unit, Box 8500, Ottawa, Canada.



McKee on location: the one-man film crew is less obtrusive.